

LET'S Talk

FALL 2005

HEALTHY BODIES • SOUND MINDS • A SAFE PLACE TO WORK

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

THE NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (NCADV) sponsors **Domestic Violence Awareness Month** every October to raise awareness of domestic violence and work to end such violence against women and children.

Anyone in an abusive situation knows trying to get out of it can be difficult, even dangerous. However, this doesn't mean you don't have options.

First, contact your local domestic violence organization (listed in the telephone directory) or the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **800-799-7233** (or **800-787-3224** for TTY). It provides crisis intervention, information and referrals to local organizations. For more information, log on to the NCADV Web site at www.ncadv.org.

To read more about protecting yourself against domestic violence, read *Close the Door on Domestic Violence* on page 3 of this newsletter.

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can also offer information and help for those involved in abusive situations. Call your EAP at **800-222-0364** (TTY, **888-262-7848**), or visit our Web site at www.FOH4You.com.

It's Time to Think Positive

PICTURE A ROSE BUSH IN FULL BLOOM. What did you notice first: the roses or the thorns? A rose bush has plenty of both. But if you focused on the roses and overlooked the thorns, you were thinking positive.

Thinking positive is a choice. It's a decision to appreciate the roses in your life (loved ones, favorite activities and relaxing moments) while letting go of the thorns (stresses, disappointments and losses).

This doesn't mean pretending to be happy when you're not. If you're upset, it's important to talk about and deal with your feelings.

Thinking positive means choosing to fill your mind with positive thoughts. Your reward will be a calmer, more hopeful attitude.

A positive outlook helps you relax and feel more competent when dealing with everyday challenges.

How to change your mind

If you tend to count your worries instead of your blessings, it's time for a fresh approach. Here's how to start thinking more positively.

■ **REASON WITH FACTS**, not feelings. Changes in your life can make you feel



uncertain and anxious, causing you to fear the worst. Instead, step back and get the facts. Talk to an expert, such as your doctor, and find out exactly what you can expect.

■ **STAY CONNECTED.** Keep in touch with friends and loved ones, and be open to developing new friendships.

■ **PLAN FOR YOUR HAPPINESS.** Schedule time for pleasant activities as often as possible. Having something to look forward to will keep your spirits up.

■ **FIND THE SILVER LINING.** Give yourself time to adjust to change or loss. Change can bring new opportunities: Be open to them. Your life won't be the same, but it likely can be better than what you imagine.

what's new

Late-Breaking Health News

>>Laughter Helps Blood Vessels Function Better

Using funny movies to gauge the effect of emotions on cardiovascular health, researchers at the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore found that laughter is linked to healthy function of blood vessels. While the study participants watched the films, their laughter caused the tissue that forms the inner lining of blood vessels, the endothelium, to dilate or expand in order to increase blood flow.

When the same group of study volunteers was shown a movie that produced mental stress, their blood-vessel linings developed a potentially unhealthy response called vasoconstriction, reducing blood flow.

"The endothelium is the first line in the development of atherosclerosis or hardening of the arteries," says principal investigator Michael Miller, M.D., director of preventive cardiology at the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore. "So, given the results of our study, it's conceivable that laughing may be important to maintain a healthy endothelium and reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease."

>>A Man's Waist Size Can Predict His Diabetes Risk

A 13-year study of 27,000 men found the bigger the waist, the greater the risk of developing diabetes. Men with waists 37.9 to 39.8 inches in circumference, for example, had a risk five times as great as those whose waists were 29 to 34 inches, according to the study published in the *American Journal of Clinical*



Nutrition.

Researchers report waist size seemed to be a better gauge for diabetes risk than body mass index, a measure of height and weight, or a waist-to-hip ratio.

>>The Buzz About Energy Drinks

Highly caffeinated energy drinks — such as Red Bull, Go-Fast and Monster — are marketed as sources of increased energy and concentration. The drinks typically contain sugar, caffeine (often 80 mg per serving) and taurine, an amino acid containing sulfur.

But research at the University of Michigan Health System in Ann Arbor raises some concerns about the beverages, particularly when they're mixed with alcohol, ingested before intense exercise or used by children.

Mixing these beverages with alcohol is like putting one foot on the gas and one foot on the brake, say the researchers. Consuming them before intense exercise can strain the body and cause dehydration or even collapse. And, they can cause children to be hyperactive.



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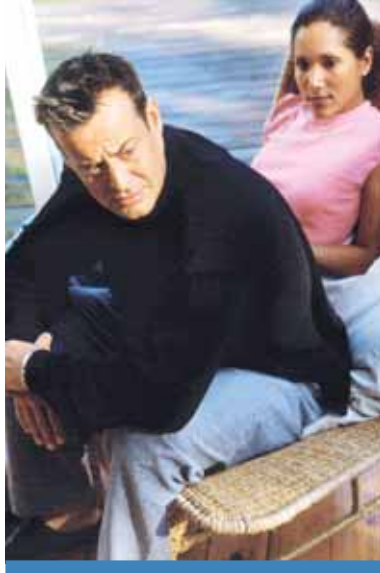
- I 19** Identity Theft
- I 20** How to Quit Smoking
- 541** Sensible Weight Loss
- 542** Lowering Your Cholesterol
- 543** Reducing Your Stress
- 544** Walking for Fitness
- 545** Workstation Comfort
- 546** Fixing an Aching Back
- 547** Start An Exercise Program
- 548** Controlling Allergies
- 549** Lowering Health-Care Costs
- 550** Living With Arthritis
- 551** Dealing With Headaches
- 552** High Blood Pressure

Close the Door on Domestic Violence

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS BEHAVIOR SOMEONE USES to control a spouse or partner through fear and intimidation. It can involve emotional, sexual and physical abuse, as well as threats and isolation. In most cases, men are the abusers.

Abuse can show itself in the following ways:

- **PHYSICAL BATTERING** — the attacks can range from bruising to punching to life-threatening choking or use of weapons.
- **SEXUAL ABUSE** — a person is forced to have sexual intercourse with the abuser or take part in unwanted sexual activity.
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL BATTERING** — psychological violence can include constant verbal abuse, harassment, excessive possessiveness, isolating the victim from friends and family, withholding money and destruction of personal property.



If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic violence, there is help available. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **800-799-7233** (or **800-787-3224** for TTY), or, in an emergency, call **911**.

Clues to violence

The following signs often appear before abuse occurs and can be a clue to a potential problem:

- Violent family life
- Use of force or violence to solve problems; warning signs include having a quick temper, overreacting to little problems and frustrations, cruelty to animals, punching walls or throwing things when upset
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Access to guns or other weapons
- Extreme emotional highs and lows; the person can be extremely kind one day and extremely cruel the next
- Rough treatment; the person has used physical force trying to get you to do something you don't want to do

Make a safety plan

A safety plan is a list of things you can do to help increase safety for you and your children. For example:

- Identify areas in the house that are safe — where there are no weapons (not the kitchen) and where you can go during an argument (not the bathroom, where there is no means of escape).
- Try to keep a phone nearby so you can call for help (get a cell phone, if possible) and memorize important numbers.
- Let neighbors or friends you trust know about the situation and develop visual or verbal signals you can use to tell them abuse is occurring.



Preparing to leave

If you've decided to leave, here are some ways you can prepare:

- Find local resources, such as battered women's shelters, and ask for help preparing to leave.
- Keep important documents, such as your checkbook, credit cards, address book, identification cards, birth certificates and documentation of abuse, together in a safe place.
- Put aside money if you can, and hide an extra set of car keys.
- Plan for a quick departure, and know where and how you will escape. You can ask for a police escort when you leave and get an order of protection.

The Facts About GHB: The “Date Rape” Drug

RAPE. BEATINGS. ROBBERY. COMA. DEATH. These are common side effects of a popular drug called GHB.

“GHB can turn a pleasant night out into a nightmare. The worst part is, you may never wake up,” says Jerry Frankenheim, Ph.D., a pharmacologist and program officer at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) in Rockville, Md.

GHB (Gamma-hydroxybutyrate) is one of a group of drugs associated with dance clubs and all-night rave parties.

Excessive dangers

Like alcohol, GHB is a depressant. In low doses, it reduces inhibitions and causes retrograde amnesia — people who take it forget what happened to them.

GHB is known as the “date-rape” drug because it can easily be slipped into a drink, making the victim helpless against sexual or other assaults.

In higher doses, GHB causes coma and death from respiratory failure or aspiration — choking on your vomit.



Here are other reasons GHB worries doctors and parents:

- GHB is hard to detect. The taste is easily masked by most drinks.
- It's one of the easiest club drugs to make. Most street GHB is made in home labs, so the doses are unreliable.
- There's no simple test for GHB and no antidote. “You go to the ER, and doctors have no idea what they're dealing with,” says Frankenheim.

To be safe:

- Never accept any food or drink from a stranger — or even someone you know.
- Watch your drink being poured and be sure it's from a fresh bottle or can or straight from the tap.
- Keep your drink with you at all times.
- Seek medical help quickly if someone appears to be overdosing.



FEDERAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
a component of the US Public Health Service
Program Support Center
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The Federal Consortium EAP provides assessment, counseling, referral, training and consultation to federal employees and agencies throughout the United States. For administrative details about the program, contact Doug Mahy, Federal Occupational Health at 214-767-3030 or dmahy@psc.gov.

If you have not received the right quantity of newsletters, your address is incorrect or has changed, you would like to have the newsletter sent to you electronically, or you have other questions regarding the newsletter, contact Ayrol Young, Federal Occupational Health, at 312-886-5479 or ayoung@psc.gov. To visit us on the Web, go to www.FOH4You.com.

Help available all day, all week, all year.

1-800-222-0364

TTY: 1-888-262-7848

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Financial Counseling Tips

Did you know? Your Financial Consultation program can assist with “big picture” topics, such as retirement planning and education funding, and can also help you with many other topics. Here are a few examples:

First-Time Home Buyers Seeking FHA Or VA Loans:

Prospective home buyers know the advantages of FHA or VA loans, but have trouble getting mortgage approval because of a troubled credit rating.

How we respond: Credit ratings can be improved! We help by discussing credit reports obtained for free by the employee, identifying the problems which likely caused a credit refusal and advising which items to address first to improve a credit rating.

Loss Of Government-Sponsored Credit Card Privileges, Potential Termination:

Employees have received notice from their employer that their government-sponsored credit card is delinquent. The employee will lose their job within weeks unless specific progress can be shown towards eliminating the delinquency.

How we respond: We advise of the best options towards addressing the delinquency, including timely submission of expense reports, establishing and managing a budget, or consolidating debt through a nonprofit credit management agency, and describe the steps for curing it on a timely basis.

Security Clearance Is In Danger Because of Negative Background Checks:

A routine employee background check has identified a credit problem which will cause the loss of security clearance needed to keep the job.

How we respond: We help by identifying the problem on your credit report, advising the best ways to improve your credit score, and describing step-by-step how to prove that progress is being made on the credit problem.

To learn more, please call your program's toll-free number at **800-222-0364** or visit the web site at www.FOH4You.com.